

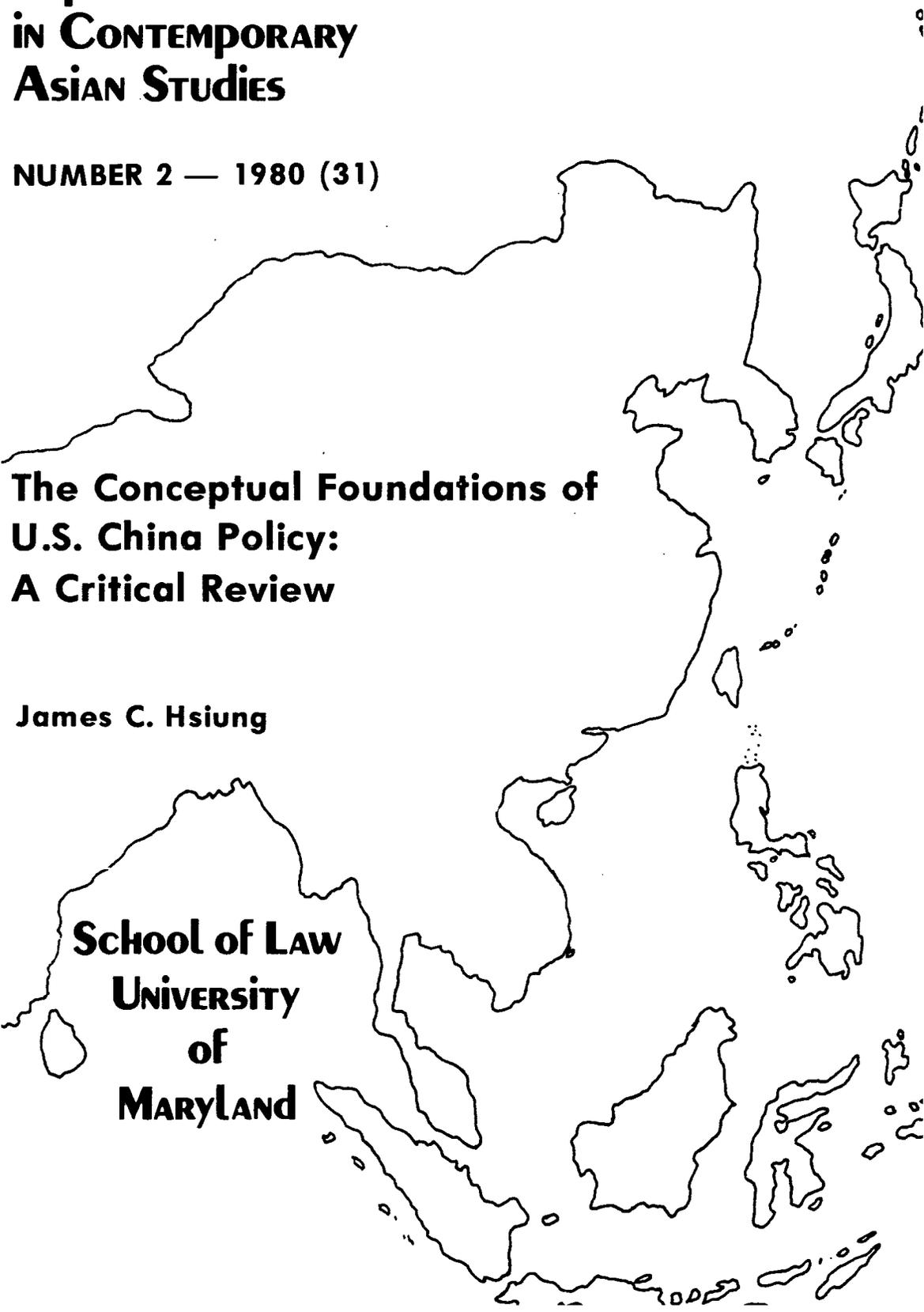
**OCCASIONAL PAPERS/  
REPRINTS SERIES  
IN CONTEMPORARY  
ASIAN STUDIES**

**NUMBER 2 — 1980 (31)**

**The Conceptual Foundations of  
U.S. China Policy:  
A Critical Review**

**James C. Hsiung**

**School of LAW  
UNIVERSITY  
of  
MARYLAND**



***Occasional Papers/Reprints Series  
in Contemporary Asian Studies***

---

General Editor: Hungdah Chiu

Acting Executive Editor: David Salem

Managing Editor: Julia Fang

**Editorial Advisory Board**

Professor Robert A. Scalapino, University of California  
at Berkeley

Professor Martin Wilbur, Columbia University

Professor Gaston J. Sigur, George Washington University

Professor Shao-chuan Leng, University of Virginia

Professor Lawrence W. Beer, University of Colorado

Professor James Hsiung, New York University

Dr. Robert Heuser, Max-Planck-Institute for Comparative Public  
Law and International Law at Heidelberg

Dr. Lih-wu Han, Political Science Association of the  
Republic of China

Professor K. P. Misra, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India

Professor J. S. Prybyla, The Pennsylvania State University

Professor Toshio Sawada, Sophia University, Japan

Published with the cooperation of the Maryland International Law Society.

All contributions (in English only) and communications should be sent to

Professor Hungdah Chiu, University of Maryland School of Law,

500 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201 USA.

All publications in this series reflect only the views of the authors.

While the editor accepts responsibility for the selection of materials to be published, the individual author is responsible for statements of facts and expressions of opinion contained therein.

Subscription is US \$10.00 for 8 issues (regardless of the price of individual issues) in the United States and Canada and \$12.00 for overseas. Check should be addressed to OPRSCAS and sent to Professor Hungdah Chiu.

Price for single copy of this issue: US \$1.00

THE CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS OF U.S. CHINA POLICY:  
A CRITICAL REVIEW

BY JAMES C. HSIUNG  
Professor of Political Science  
New York University

**Historical Perspectives**

Before we plunge into the present, a review of the historical background of U.S. and Chinese foreign policies and of Sino-U.S. relations, I believe, will be helpful. I shall be very brief, touching on only the barest essentials.

Though seldom brought out fully, one common feature seems to grace the diplomatic history of both countries, namely, their respective perception of and approach to power. The language used to couch their historical postures has only beclouded that commonality. On the surface, the "isolationist" policy pursued by the United States until the dawn of the present century had little in common with the inward-looking mentality of an ancient Chinese empire surrounded by a web of tributary states. Underneath the surface, however, both shared a similar nonchalance toward the world outside and the latter's diplomatic *lingua franca*, namely, balance of power.

Just like the Chinese empire, which relied on what it conceived to be self-sufficient power in its own possession, isolationist America also assumed a self-sufficiency in its own power to protect American national interests within its own Hemisphere. The disengagement urged in Washington's *Farewell Address* and the abstentionism contained in the Monroe Doctrine were both predicated upon a conviction that balance of power as a statecraft should be kept on the European continent and not extended to the Americas. Within the Hemispheric confines, peace and stability were viewed as dependent on the preponderance of power anchored in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, the inward-looking Chinese empire also assumed that, instead of balance, the preponderance of power located in China held the key to tranquillity throughout East Asia. Both China and the United States, therefore, are latecomers in the game of balance of power. Hans Morgenthau has argued that twentieth-century American crusading globalism, at least until the Vietnam fiasco, was like a kind of isolationism turned inside out, just as isolationism had been

---

1. Hans J. Morgenthau, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1969), esp. pp. 15-17; 158-159.

an inverted globalism before, because both policies were conceptually predicated upon the same self-sufficiency assumption regarding American power.<sup>2</sup> One may go on to ask whether the same historical roots could anticipate a future Chinese version of global involvement on the international horizon.

American policy toward China over time has gone through significant changes and reversals, in response both to shifts in this country's larger concerns and to changing reality in the Asian-Pacific area. The first American departure from the isolationist policy was probably its involvement in the Powers' nineteenth-century competitive meddling in China. A junior partner to this venture then, the United States had to resort to a balance of power of sorts. The "Open Door" policy urged upon the Powers by Secretary of State John Hay, at the turn of the century, was designed to encourage them to accept limits to their "spheres of influence" and to play a "non-zero-sum game" in China. It was a plea to keep the door open, as it were, for the late-comer United States, which no longer enjoyed preponderance of power once outside of its own geographical preserve.

China remained an "object" (as opposed to "participant") in international politics and in U.S. foreign policy until World War II. Determined to forestall a resurgent Japan, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was prepared to shore up wartime ally China (then under the Kuomintang government) and to make it a postwar stabilizer in Asia. At FDR's insistence, the Republic of China (ROC) was made one of the Big Five in the United Nations. The FDR postwar scenario, which called for clipping Japan of its wings — detaching Korea and Taiwan from its control — anticipated a postwar order that would rest on a regional balance to be presided over by the United States, in which China would play a special role by dint of its strategic importance and, equally, because it was expected to remain a U.S. ally.

The Communist takeover in mainland China upset the original U.S. designs, with far-reaching consequences. China in Communist hands ruined American expectations of a staunch ally that would work in concert with Washington to help curb Soviet expansionism in the Far East and watch over defeated Japan. Peking's militancy, displayed during and beyond the Korean War, compelled a reversal of U.S. policy toward East Asia as a whole. In the new scenario, especially under Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, stability would depend on relentless direct U.S. involvement, with the support

---

2. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

of a revived Japan and a fortified Taiwan (under the Koumintang) kept in the "free world" camp. This coincided with the "turning inside out" from isolationism to globalism to which Morgenthau was referring.

The integration of Taiwan into America's interlocking webs of mutual security pacts, built in the mid-1950s, was premised upon the continuing hostility between Washington and a Soviet-backed Peking regime, which Washington refused to recognize. Containing the People's Republic of China (PRC) was, therefore, part of the American efforts toward containing the Soviet empire.

At least three ironies marked the twists and turns of postwar history. The first is that former enemy Japan, contrary to FDR's blueprint, had to be helped out of defeat to become a U.S. bulwark in East Asia. The second is the unexpectedly short-lived duration of the Peking-Moscow axis, the collapse of which called into question the very rationale of the U.S. containment policy toward China. The last irony is that when U.S. policy toward China had to be reversed again in the 1970s, Taiwan, the ally of nearly three decades, if one starts counting from the ROC's loss of the China mainland in 1949, became a stumbling block for a speedy "normalization" of relations with Peking. Anxiousness to overcome the stumbling block eventually led President Carter to "abandon" or derecognize Taiwan, as from January 1, 1979, when diplomatic relations had to be established with Peking. Yet the same "stumbling block" syndrome has generated much cynicism, among advocates of speedy normalization with Peking, toward Taiwan; this cynicism remains totally incompatible with the island's cordial relations with the United States.

Below, I shall attempt to ascertain the rationale of Washington's new China policy, associated with the "normalization" process and beyond, and to evaluate its conceptual bases.

### **The Turnaround in U.S. China Policy**

Let me first enumerate some of the most commonly cited reasons for the turnaround in U.S. attitudes toward Peking, beginning in the late 1960s. In addition to the Sino-Soviet split mentioned above, the Vietnam fiasco compelled a reversal in U.S. policy toward the Asia-Pacific area, which called for the disengagement of U.S. ground troops from the Asian continent, as under Nixon's Guam Doctrine of 1969. The political vacuum left by the United States, however, had to be filled, especially in view of Soviet interests in the area. China, now a potential nuclear power hostile to Moscow, could not be ignored as a

possible counterweight to a Soviet-backed Hanoi, or a regional stabilizer, if she could be induced to cooperate with the United States and Japan. The idea of a regional stabilizer, in part at least, probably harked back to FDR's original design, although the assumed common target had shifted from Japan to the Soviet Union.

The new expectations of what China could do in an induced collaboration with the United States were shared by the principal architects of U.S. foreign policy under Presidents Nixon and Carter. If the idea of a "China card" was seminal and latent in Kissinger, it became more explicit in Brzezinski, the head of the current National Security Council (NSC). I would add, however, that the course of normalizing relations with the PRC had its logic in the world's transition from the previous era of dyadic nuclear deterrence to a new era of multiple deterrence. Certain "rules of the game" were drastically transformed as a result of China's entry into the Nuclear Club. Although not yet a full-fledged nuclear competitor, China entered the game as a "spoiler," posing a number of grave questions for strategic thinking. First, with three in the game it was no longer possible to identify, with the same certitude as before, the origin of a nuclear first-strike. A corollary to this "nuclear anonymity" problem was the danger of a catalytic war, which could be triggered by an initial attack launched by a third power but simulated as coming from another source. Even when both these problems were resolved, given sufficient time and the aid of satellite surveillance, another problem, which can be called the "victor's inheritance," was insurmountable. That is to say, even if in a bilateral nuclear exchange one of the countries emerged as the victor, it would still have lost vis-a-vis the third party, whose nuclear arsenal remained intact.<sup>3</sup>

This no-win situation greatly impaired the value of the prevailing concept of massive "punishment" (or MAD, mutual assured destruction), which had been the central pillar of the (dyadic) deterrence doctrine. It compelled recognition of an equally important alternative approach premised on the concept of "reward." The age of détente, beginning with Kissinger, would depend on a structure of peace in which all the nuclear adversaries would be "rewarded" for mutual good behavior (i.e., not rocking the nuclear boat).

A few prerequisites, it should be noted, must be present for the reward structure to work. (a) In the first place, decision-makers must take a holistic view of foreign policy, so that losses in one area can be

---

3. Richard Rosecrance, *The Future of the International Strategic System* (San Francisco: Chandler, 1972), pp. 135-140.

made up by gains elsewhere. Trade-offs are extremely important if the reward structure is to work, and they are possible only if the principal national actors are playing a non-zero-sum game. (b) The sources of capability of the principal actors must be differentiated from each other so that each will have something to offer in the rewarding exchange. (c) All principal actors must be involved in an ever-expanding web of interdependence, so that any attempt by one to hurt another will, by the workings of interdependence, boomerang. (d) There should be no ganging-up by any two against a third nuclear power, lest the reward chain be broken.<sup>4</sup>

Although there are other "rules," these are the most essential ones. The reward structure would not work unless all the principals are willing to accept one another as co-equals. Hence, the new "rules of the game" contained a logic compelling the U.S. to abandon its previous non-recognition policy and to accept the PRC officially as a principal actor.

Before we go on, let us pause here to note that the entire Kissingerian détente scenario required (a) a sufficient degree of interdependence, in order for the concept of mutual reward to work, and (b) a compatible willingness on the part of all the principals to accept the same premises. Here lies the flimsy foundation on which the entire détente policy was built. While containment as a policy was abolished, the structure of peace Kissinger sought remained to be built.<sup>5</sup> The degree of interdependence required for the concept of mutual reward to work effectively, as a self-enlightened guarantee of peace, would still take years to materialize. The defect in the Kissingerian blueprint of peace in this respect is that it fell into a tautology. It set out to build, bit by bit, an increasingly mutually dependent relationship between the two superpowers (and with China), so that ultimately they would be so bound to each other that neither would seek to hurt the other if it would mean self-hurting as well. (An everyday analogy would be a husband-wife joint checking account: the wife who attempts to hurt the husband by squandering away his money will find that she is squandering away her own money, too.) But, then, it plunged into treating U.S.-Soviet relations as though the marriage was already in existence.<sup>6</sup>

---

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 151-159.

5. This point was made by Stanley Hoffman in a stimulating critique of the Kissingerian legacy, Op-Ed, *New York Times*, January 16, 1977, p. 19.

6. For a more detailed discussion, see my "U.S. Relations with China in the Post-Kissingerian Era: A Sensible Policy for the 1980's," *Asian Survey*, XVII, 8 (August 1977), 691-710.

The snowballing effect of détente did not occur as its architect had expected. Neither the United States, nor the Soviet Union, stopped seeking unilateral advantages by exploiting the other's political weaknesses as they emerged. Kissingerian détente did not change, nor could it have changed, Soviet overall strategy. Détente would work only if and when the structure of interdependence had already come into existence, or at least when the principals shared, with a comparable degree of conviction, a perceived common destiny, but not before.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Kissingerian Premises and the Opening to China**

The opening to China and the modality set for it in the Shanghai communique signed by President Nixon in February, 1972, followed certain premises which were related to but not necessarily compatible with the overall Kissingerian design for détente.

(1) The first premise was that the Sino-Soviet split was irreversible and the United States could take advantage of it by alternately "tilting" to one and then the other of the two Communist giants. It appears to me that the Kissingerian "tilting" strategy ran afoul of one of the crucial maxims (or "rules of the game") of détente, viz., that there be no ganging-up. Furthermore, the intent to manipulate one Communist power against the other undercut the very conceptual foundation of détente that required mutual reward for good behavior (not rocking the boat).

The opening to China in 1972 was a Kissingerian tactic to coerce the Soviets into détente with the U.S., taking advantage of the competitive nature of Sino-Soviet relations. Then in 1974, the United States turned around and tilted toward the Soviet Union, as though to placate the Soviets at the expense of the Chinese (e.g., the choice of the site for the Vladivostock conference). In the end, tilting succeeded in alternately alienating the Soviets (hence, the SALT II impasse) and then the Chinese, who reduced their trade with the United States in 1975-1976 and returned to militant rhetoric in early 1976.

(2) The second Kissingerian premise had to do with his balance of power preoccupation and with China's position in the larger U.S.-Soviet relationship. Kissinger's blueprint was taken from the 19th-century European diplomatic experience, more especially from the Bismarckian "supergame" design aimed at building a web of

---

7. *Ibid.* Also, George Liska, *Beyond Kissinger: Ways of Conservative Statecraft* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975).

balancing bilateral relationships of the major powers, to the exclusion of the lesser actors. Furthermore, there was also an assumption about China's relative strength. To Kissinger, China was then strong enough to be a counterweight to the Soviets, but not strong enough to threaten the United States.

The same disregard for changing times which had underscored Kissinger's penchant for replaying the 19th-century balancing game was responsible for his insensitivity toward the temporal limitations in his calculations about the value of China's relative power. What if at time-<sub>n</sub> China's power should become a threat equally to the Soviet Union and the United States? Would there be any back-up support the United States could draw on, in a new round of realignments? That eventuality didn't seem to have entered into Kissinger's calculations, in his design for a balanced structure of peace.

Since Kissinger had no anticipation for a possible U.S. need for back-up support in coping with China at time-<sub>n</sub>, Taiwan held out no strategic significance for Kissinger either now or in the future. And, precisely because he was preoccupied with supergame politics, Kissinger was anxious to dispose of Taiwan as a stumbling block in U.S.-PRC relations. He was known to be willing to accept the original Chinese wording for the Shanghai communique in 1972, which would have explicitly and irretrievably committed the United States to abandoning the island without any recourse or compensating concessions in return. Only Nixon's masterful interjection of fuzziness restored flexibility to the United States, changing the wording to read:

The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves.<sup>8</sup>

(3) The third Kissingerian premise was that if China was to be encouraged to direct its undivided attention northward, to deal with the Soviets, all her "southern" problems (i.e., the Vietnam conflict and the Taiwan question) must be resolved for her once and for all. Only then, so the thinking went, would Peking's leaders be relieved of

---

8. See the "Shanghai Communique" of February 27, 1972, text reproduced in U.S. Department of State, *Selected Documents No. 9: U.S. Policy Toward China, July 15, 1971-January 15, 1979* (January 1979), p. 6.

all their woes and worries along their southern borders and train their sights wholeheartedly on Moscow. The assumption here that decision-makers could deal with only one issue at a time — that China could not simultaneously deal with her Colossal North and her “southern” problems — is highly questionable and even alarming.

Perhaps Kissinger was projecting his personal experience to the case, thinking that in Peking, too, there was his Chinese counterpart very much made in his own image, concentrating in his hands all major foreign policy matters. Years later, we were to learn by Kissinger’s own admission that his preoccupation with the Middle East at one point had left this country without an African policy, thus giving the Soviets a free hand in Angola.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Brzezinski Premises and Normalization**

Although there is no one central place to look for an authoritative and unequivocal statement of Washington’s foreign policy today, there does seem to be an awareness among President Carter’s inner circles of some of the deficiencies in the Kissingerian legacy. Perhaps nowhere is this borne out more substantively than in the rationale or philosophy behind the series of orchestrated foreign visits by high-level officials, starting with President Carter’s two extended trips abroad in late 1977 and early 1978. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the President’s national security adviser, spelled out that philosophy most cogently in his briefing with reporters on December 20, 1977. He began with a diagnosis of the far-reaching changes since World War II, marked by a steady decline in the West’s power, starting with decolonialization and culminating in the West’s growing dependence on vital resources from the less-developed countries (LDC’s).

On the eve of World War II, Brzezinski noted, the West controlled 80% of the world’s land mass and 75% of the world’s population. By the end of the century, 80% of the global population will live in what he called the “southern arc,” extending from Latin America and Africa, to Asia. This drastic demographic shift, along with other changes, he pointed out, had ominous implications for the West and required an immediate remedial policy.

The reality of the world today, Brzezinski continued, is one in which power is diffused among four basic groups: (a) the advanced world, including the industrial West and Japan; (b) the Communist world; (c) the world of the relatively rich but still developing

---

9. Carl T. Rowan, “The Wise Dr. Kissinger,” *Washington Star*, October 12, 1979.

countries (particularly the OPEC nations and a few of the more successful developing countries, Taiwan, South Korea, etc.); and (d) the fourth world of the "global poor." With this diffusion of power, the United States can no longer dictate to the world, nor can it narrow itself to playing merely a supergame, ignoring the intermediate powers.

The instinct of survival, therefore, dictates that the United States not allow itself to get into a crossfire of both East-West conflicts (i.e., supergame conflicts involving our national security) and North-South conflicts (i.e., subgame conflicts involving the industrial nations' access to resources in the LDC's), all converging to tap the United State's responsive capacity. The foremost task for U.S. foreign policy, according to the NSC chairman, is how to rally together the three non-Communist worlds on the U.S. side, or, in other words, to line up a West-South alliance. In so doing, however, the United States must anticipate and accommodate the growing political awareness or, in Brzezinski's words, "rising crescendo," among countries in the South Arc, and make the best of the Sino-Soviet division and the general contradictions within the Communist world.

The most important point, as it appears, is a purported departure from the Kissingerian supergame scenario. Supergame is not to be abandoned, but to be played within a larger, truly global, context. The United States will do its utmost to enlarge the pool of real or potential back-up allies beyond the immediate Washington-Moscow-Peking triangle. Brzezinski was probably voicing the Carter Administration's desires for a new policy orientation when he stated that the earlier U.S. "Atlanticist Connection" (that is, more or less exclusive economic and military alignment with Western Europe), a doctrine directly linked to Kissinger, was no longer adequate.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the anti-Kissingerian rhetoric, however, the foreign policy output during the first two and one-half years of the Carter Administration does not seem to corroborate the existence of a coherent foreign policy "architecture," as distinct from playing "acrobatics," a charge previously leveled at Kissinger by critic Brzezinski during the Nixon-Ford years. If anything, the purported architecture merely exists on paper, not in actual policy, far less in implementation. Despite the lip service to the well-being of the

---

10. Brzezinski's briefing to reporters, December 20, 1977. See also his speech to the International Platform Association, August 2, 1979, "American Power and Global Change," released by the U.S. Department of State, as Current Policy No. 81.

LDC's, Washington has taken no concrete steps to improve North-South relations, as can be witnessed in the South's recalcitrant reaction to the Tokyo round of the GATT negotiations and the agreement initialed by the United States and 19 other industrial nations in Geneva, in April, 1979.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the verbal acknowledgement of ideological pluralism in Brzezinski's statement, the current Administration's policy has been much more moralistically tinged than under four previous Presidents. Carter's own "human rights" concerns have given a new fillip to ideological moralism, which was certainly lacking with Kissinger. Brzezinski's personal hatred for Soviet Communism has only reinforced the ideological bitterness.

Despite the outward importance attached to regional and intermediate powers, as propounded by the national security adviser, the Carter Administration has committed itself to withdrawing U.S. troops from South Korea, albeit at a slower pace than originally scheduled as a result of criticisms; it has not made a habit of consulting regional leaders in its approach to the Middle East or Latin America; and it has downgraded its relations with Taiwan without much regard for the sentiments of the other Asian neighbors (e.g., Singapore and Japan). None of these omissions or commissions shows much respect for regional or intermediate powers.

In the normalization of relations with Peking, Washington manifested certain aspirations or followed certain assumptions which seemed to rest on quite questionable grounds, to which we shall now turn.

(1) In the first place, the Brzezinski-Oksenberg team in the NSC has inherited all the three Kissingerian premises discussed above, in fact, if not completely in rhetoric. Despite Brzezinski's verbal criticism of Kissinger's supergame fixation, the current NSC head does not seem to have outgrown his earlier preoccupation with triangularity. Writing in 1972 in criticism of Kissinger's balance of power "delusion," Brzezinski had stressed that, contrary to the Kissingerian assumptions, China was not a full-fledged partner in the Washington-Moscow-Peking triangle, and that there were only "2 and ½ powers" in the world. Besides, he continued, "what we now have, and are likely to have for some time, is a combination of a bipolar

---

11. At the 5th session of UNCTAD, in Manila, May 7-June 3, 1978, the LDC's charged that the new Geneva agreement initialed by the 20 industrial nations hurts more than it helps the poor. *New York Times*, May 7, 1979. See also *U.N. Chronicle*, July 1979, p. 44ff.

power world and a multiple state interplay." The United States occupied a pivotal role in two overlapping triangles, one competitive, and the other cooperative: American-China-Russia, and America-Europe-Japan. The author proclaimed then that our cooperative relationship with Europe and Japan needed to be made more cooperative for the sake of human progress; and the competitive one with Russia and China needed to be made less competitive for the sake of peace.<sup>12</sup> Now as Carter's principal security adviser, Brzezinski, however, has reversed himself, except in his habit of thinking of foreign policy in terms of triangularities. He has not only become more and more like Kissinger but in some aspects has gone even much further.

The return to triangularity, first of all, is an abandonment of the brief skirting with a global architecture, which Brzezinski so eloquently glorified during the beginning months of the Carter Administration. His personal fixation with the America-Russia-China triangle has turned out to be a repetition of Kissinger's supergame syndrome in everything but the name. Instead of his own 1972 call for making that triangular relationship less competitive, Brzezinski, in actively playing the "China card," has pushed U.S.-Soviet competition into a new high. The episode of Soviet troops in Cuba in the Fall of 1979 was a first public reminder of the quiet intensifications of bisuperpower competition.

The present NSC chief has not only accepted Kissinger's assumption regarding the permanence of the Sino-Soviet split and his balance of power "delusion," but has turned the Kissingerian tilting game into a zealous card game: playing the "China card" against Moscow. If the tilting had been a temporary tactic, to be played alternately in favor of China and then the Soviet Union, the card game now has all the appearance of a permanent fixture in Washington's current foreign policy. According to a testimony before Congress on October 16, 1979, by Dr. Marshall D. Shulman, the State Department's ranking Soviet adviser, U.S.-Soviet relations "are unlikely to be reconciled in the near future" as long as U.S. favoritism toward Peking continues.<sup>13</sup> Kissinger's tilting was still in the tradition of balance of power and still preserved a semblance of evenhandedness, although in a zigzagged way, toward both the

---

12. Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Balance of Power Delusion," *Foreign Policy*, No. 7 (Summer 1972), esp. pp. 57-58.

13. See Bernard Gwertzman, "Evenhanded Treatment of Moscow and Peking Faces Test," *New York Times*, October 16, 1979.

Chinese and the Soviets. The current "out to get the Russians" posture, doggedly seeking to cultivate a loose alliance with the enemy's enemy to make a score, seems to have thrown all scruples about evenhandedness to the winds.<sup>14</sup>

The loss of evenhandedness, which preceded the Soviet "invasion" of Afghanistan, has resulted from the collapse of a global-balance paradigm postulating the interaction and mutually restraining roles by a multiple set of actors playing a non-zero-sum game. In its place has arisen an orientation thrown off balance by a singular anti-Soviet preoccupation. Conceptually, the collapse incurs the perils of returning to a cold-war bipolar mentality, in that all other nations become pawns in the American contention with the Soviet Union. The overriding desire to take on the Soviets, quite naturally, led to the "discovery" of China as a potential ally (*qua* pawn), whose newly found strategic importance not only justified advancing the normalization timetable and upgrading U.S. relations with Peking, but shunted off considerations for possible advantages of simultaneous normalization, or maintaining evenhandedness, with Vietnam. Just as the tilt toward China away from the Soviet Union has set in motion a chain of reactions threatening the continuance of détente in early 1980, the loss of evenhandedness in Washington's posture toward China and Vietnam has encouraged Hanoi to seek closer ties with Moscow and step up its adventures in Kampuchea with a vengeance.<sup>15</sup> There is a self-fulfilling prophecy in both cases.

In playing the China card, Brzezinski has embraced the premise of the irreversibility of the Sino-Soviet split with greater piety than Kissinger ever did. Ironically, he may even point to events in early 1980 as proof of the inevitability of further intensification of the Sino-Soviet competition, among other places, in Southwest Asia. The irreversibility assumption ignores both the lessons of history and the place of Realpolitik (i.e., national interest). The making and breaking of the Sino-Soviet alliance of the 1950s was guided primarily by considerations of convergent national interests. A historical antecedent was the secret alliance of 1896 concluded by Prime Minister Li Hung-chang with his Tsarist Russian counterpart, Count Wittie, which was likewise dictated by a common interest (in this case, against a common enemy, Japan). The likelihood of a Sino-Soviet

---

14. *Ibid.*

15. Gareth Porter, "U.S. and Vietnam — The Missed Chance," *The Nation*, October 20, 1979, pp. 366-369.

rapprochement, therefore, depends on the test of convergent interests in the future, not on our wishful thinking or card-playing.

China is not a "card" any more than the United States is a "card." The very image of a "card" is that it is without volition and independent judgment. China, on the contrary, is fully aware of the danger of being drawn too closely into the American technological orbit, which would cause her to lose her independence. It was over the defense of her national independence that China clashed with her Soviet ally earlier. As I learned during my visit in China, in August-September 1979, Peking's leaders are consciously resisting Washington's card-playing by embarking upon a multi-channeled diplomacy, keeping all doors open, including the door on the north, and spreading her eggs in different baskets. Despite the distractions of Peking's anti-Soviet rhetoric, the Chinese did try to give new impetus to the Sino-Soviet talks, which were first resumed in Moscow in September, 1979, and later shifted back to Peking, the habitual site, until halted in January, 1980, because of the Afghanistan crisis.

Washington's card playing not only violates the evenhanded principle vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. It, too, violates the "no ganging up" maxim noted before, to an extent that has surpassed Kissinger's tilting game. Washington's acceptance, at Chinese insistence, of the anti-hegemony clause in the final communique signed by President Carter and visiting Deputy Premier Deng, on February 1, 1979, constituted a clear case that the "no ganging up" maxim was ignored. The clause containing the Chinese code-word for anti-Sovietism upset the President's earlier assurance that U.S. normalization of relations with the PRC was not at the expense of any other country but purely in the interest of peace.<sup>16</sup>

(2) The most important Brzezinski-Oksenberg addendum to the Kissingerian legacy is the premise that it is in the American interest to make China a responsible actor.<sup>17</sup> The greatly elevated role imputed to China, it should be noted, is a reversal of Brzezinski's own claim in 1972, while criticizing Kissinger, that China was not in the superpower company and should not play such a role.

There is a twisted logic in the new reasoning, which runs like this: (a) If there is instability in the international environment, it is

---

16. See President Carter's remarks to reporters on December 15, 1978, announcing the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Text in *Selected Documents No. 9, op. cit.*, n.8 above, p. 47.

17. See Brzezinski's remarks at a Department of State briefing on China, January 15, 1979, in *ibid.*, p. 61-64.

because China has not been brought into the supergame and has not been acting responsibly; (b) if China has not acted responsibly it is because she is not strong enough; so let us make her stronger; and (c) if there is still no stability, then it is because we have not made China strong enough to act responsibly; so let us do more to make her even stronger. The implicit assumption here is that once made sufficiently strong, reaching a parity with Moscow, China will be a responsible counterweight shielding the United States from the brunt of the Soviet threat.

To the layman, the expectation seems to have been substantiated in the midst of the Afghan crisis, when the United States actually looked to China for cooperation in countering the Soviet advance. The reasoning has questionable long-range application, however, since it is based on one's faith — as opposed to reality — that China, when made sufficiently powerful, will remain an unswerving U.S. ally and continue to be indiscriminately anti-Soviet. All this would be possible only if we had a reasonable assurance that China could be made to play into our hands and do our bidding in our conflicts with Moscow. Furthermore, one should not lose sight of an analogy in the history of U.S.-Soviet relations: The *détente* between the two superpowers became possible only *after*, not *before*, the Soviets had reached a position of nuclear parity with the United States. What is there to assure us that the Chinese will spurn similar *détente* efforts once they have reached a parity with Moscow?

Moreover, our definition of a responsible actor may or may not coincide with Peking's expectations. A military invasion of Taiwan, for example, would not be an irresponsible act in Peking's eyes and would be merely an "internal affair" involving a Chinese province. To Brzezinski, a responsible China should act to help this country curb Soviet expansionism. To be true, a responsible posture from Peking's point of view, when she has attained parity, could mean any of the following things: (a) a bolder stance against Moscow, (b) a possible Sino-Soviet rapprochement, especially if China's relations with Washington should go sour, or (c) a more independent foreign policy, aloof from both Washington and Moscow. There is no reason to anticipate any one singular outcome, or to expect Peking to dance to Washington's (or Brzezinski's) tunes.

For similar reasons, one should be cautious about the prospect of China cooperating with Washington, in the foreseeable future, in the latter's attempt to build a West-South alliance, encompassing the industrially advanced nations and the LDC's, directed against Moscow. For Peking to cooperate momentarily with Washington in

responding to a given common threat such as over Afghanistan<sup>18</sup> is one thing. But to commit itself to a perpetual supporting role in a major area of the U.S.'s global concerns is quite another. As an independent nation, China should be expected to maintain her own flexibility and discretion in regard to both the Soviet Union and the Third World countries.

(3) Another Brzezinski-Oksenberg premise underlining our current China policy is the assumption that China's preoccupation with its internal "four modernizations" at home will make her dependent upon the U.S.'s and Japan's good will and technological transfers. This dependency, so the argument goes, will help constrain Peking and keep it a responsible actor.<sup>19</sup> The problem with the dependency thesis is three-fold: (a) No country's foreign policy today, especially in China's case, can be made intractably dependent on any other country either for good will or vital imports. What China does not get from the United States, she can get from West Germany, Japan, France, England, Italy, or another source. (During my visit in Moscow, in January 1980, I was struck by reciprocal Soviet desires to improve relations with China, and Soviet interest in greater Soviet-Chinese trade.) As noted before, the Chinese are consciously reacting to Washington's orbit-building efforts and are committed to a policy of spreading out their risks. This may explain why Chairman Hua Guofeng chose to visit France, West Germany, England, and Italy, in October 1979, prior to his scheduled trip to the United States in 1980.

(b) The second problem with the dependency premise is its neglect of the possibility that as China becomes stronger, albeit in part owing to U.S. help and encouragement, the kind of restraints that Washington may be able to place upon it now will almost

---

18. Even over Afghanistan, Peking's "cooperation" was muted, and the Chinese opposed the proposal of "neutralizing" Afghanistan, which was supported by Washington.

19. A most typical representation of the argument is the following statement in a Department of State news release: "China's self-interest lies in constructive relations with the United States, Japan, and other nations of the world. The PRC has a major stake in avoiding actions that would put those relationships at grave risk, particularly as it devotes its primary attention to modernization." Text reproduced in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: A Collection of Documents and Press Coverage* (China Council, Asia Society, New York: January, 1979), p. 30. Similar views were expressed by Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, and Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, February 5, 1979, in *Taiwan: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations U.S. Senate, 96th Congress, 1st Sess.* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), pp. 16, 30.

certainly diminish in proportion to the increase in China's power. Yet, it is precisely the perpetuation of those restraints that our present China policy is pursuing and by which it is justified to the American public.

(c) The third problem is less tangible, but no less significant. In an increasingly interdependent world, no dependency relationship is without mutual liabilities between giver and receiver. Even assuming that China, by a stroke of luck, was cajoled, encouraged, induced, and hoodwinked into becoming a technological satellite of the United States, that dependency would have created a "coercive deficiency" for Peking, which the Chinese can easily manipulate to their advantage against us. Let me explain.

"Coercive deficiency" here refers to a paradoxical relationship in which a seemingly power-deficient debtor may sometimes have enough leverage to coerce the creditor into lending him more money or into rescheduling the loan simply because the two are bound in such a mutual dependency that the creditor just cannot afford to see the debtor go bankrupt.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, efforts at creating a Chinese dependency through the granting of indebtedness and making China's technology dependent on continuing supplies of U.S. parts and technical data may in turn create an unexpected leverage in Peking's hands typical of the "coercive deficiency" phenomenon. Chinese leverage, conceivably, would be further enhanced under any of the following conditions: (i) when the U.S. economy is soft and cannot afford Chinese withdrawals from the U.S. market, (ii) when the Soviet Union, or another rival of the United States, is willing to offer better terms to hurt the United States by encouraging Chinese withdrawals, and (iii) when Chinese withdrawals would bring enormous benefits to a rival of the United States or herald similar withdrawals by China's supporters.

---

20. For a fuller development of the point, see Susan Strange, "The Meaning of Multilateral Surveillance," in Robert W. Cox, ed., *International Organization: World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1969).

### Conclusion

Our foreign policy is as adequate as the conceptual foundation on which it is built. Likewise, the adequacy of our China policy depends on the soundness of its conceptual bases. The morals from the foregoing discussion are simple and evident. Our China connection, or playing the "China card," is no sounder than the premises on which it is grounded, and most of these premises, as we have attempted to show, are either highly questionable, incoherent among themselves or faultily conceived. This is not an indictment against any individual, but an exercise in analytical thinking about our foreign policy and, in particular, our China policy, arising out of a citizen's concerns about our national interest.



# *Occasional Papers/Reprints Series in Contemporary Asian Studies*

## *1977 Series*

- No. 1 — 1977**  
Chinese Attitude Toward Continental Shelf and Its Implication on  
Delimiting Seabed in Southeast Asia (Hungdah Chiu) 32 pp. \$ 1.00
- No. 2 — 1977**  
Income Distribution in the Process of Economic Growth of the  
Republic of China (Yuan-Li Wu) 45 pp. \$ 1.00
- No. 3 — 1977**  
The Indonesian Maoists: Doctrines and Perspectives (Justus M. van  
der Kroef) 31 pp. \$ 1.00
- No. 4 — 1977**  
Taiwan's Foreign Policy in the 1970s: A Case Study of Adaptation  
and Viability (Thomas J. Bellows) 22 pp. \$ 1.00
- No. 5 — 1977**  
Asian Political Scientists in North America: Professional and  
Ethnic Problems (Edited by Chun-tu Hsueh) 148 pp. Index \$ 3.00
- No. 6 — 1977**  
The Sino-Japanese Fisheries Agreement of 1975: A Comparison  
with Other North Pacific Fisheries Agreements (Song Yook  
Hong) 80 pp. \$ 2.00
- No. 7 — 1977\*\***  
Foreign Trade Contracts Between West German Companies and the  
People's Republic of China: A Case Study (Robert Heuser) 22  
pp. \$ 1.00
- No. 8 — 1977\***  
Reflections on Crime and Punishment in China, With Appended  
Sentencing Documents (Randle Edwards, Translation of  
Documents by Randle Edwards and Hungdah Chiu) 67 pp. \$ 1.00
- No. 9 — 1977**  
Chinese Arts and Literature: A Survey of Recent Trends (Edited by  
Wai-lim Yip) 126 pp. \$ 3.00
- No. 10 — 1977**  
Legal Aspects of U.S.-Republic of China Trade and Investment —  
Proceedings of A Regional Conference of the American Society  
of International Law (Edited by Hungdah Chiu and David  
Simon) 217 pp. Index \$ 5.00

# *Occasional Papers/Reprints Series in Contemporary Asian Studies*

## *1977 Series*

**No. 11 — 1977**

Asian American Assembly Position Paper: I. A Review of U.S.-  
China Relations 62 pp. \$ 1.00

**No. 12 — 1977**

Asian-American Assembly Position Paper: II. A Review of U.S.  
Employment Policy 24 pp. \$ 1.00

## *1978 Series*

**No. 1 — 1978 (13)**

Indian Ocean Politics: An Asian-African Perspective (K.P.  
Misra) 31 pp. \$ 1.00

**No. 2 — 1978 (14)**

Normalizing Relations with the People's Republic of China;  
Problems, Analysis, and Documents (Edited by Hungdah Chiu,  
with contribution by G. J. Sigur, Robert A. Scalapino, King C.  
Chen, Eugene A. Theroux, Michael Y.M. Kau, James C. Hsiung  
and James W. Morley). 207 pp. Index \$ 3.00

**No. 3 — 1978 (15)**

Growth, Distribution, and Social Change: Essays on the Economy  
of the Republic of China (Edited by Yuan-li Wu and Kung-chia  
Yeh) 227 pp. Index \$ 3.00

**No. 4 — 1978 (16)**

The Societal Objectives of Wealth, Growth, Stability, and Equity in  
Taiwan (Jan S. Prybyla) 31 pp. \$ 1.00

**No. 5 — 1978 (17)\***

The Role of Law in the People's Republic of China as Reflecting  
Mao Tse-Tung's Influence (Shao-Chuan Leng) 18 pp. \$ 1.00

**No. 6 — 1978 (18)**

Criminal Punishment in Mainland China: A Study of Some  
Yunnan Province Documents (Hungdah Chiu) 35 pp. \$ 1.00

**No. 7 — 1978 (19)**

A Guide to the Study of Japanese Law (Lawrence W. Beer and  
Hidenori Tomatsu) 45 pp. \$ 2.00

# *Occasional Papers/Reprints Series in Contemporary Asian Studies*

## *1978 Series*

**No. 8 — 1978 (20)**

The Pueblo, EC-121, and Mayaguez Incidents: Some Continuities  
and Changes (Robert Simmons) 40 pp. \$ 2.00

**No. 9 — 1978 (21)**

Two Korea's Unification Policy and Strategy (Yong Soon Yim) 82  
pp. Index \$ 2.00

## *1979 Series*

**No. 1 — 1979 (22)**

Asian Immigrants and Their Status in the U.S. (Edited by  
Hungdah Chiu) 54 pp. \$ 2.00

**No. 2 — 1979 (23)-**

Social Disorder In Peking After The 1976 Earthquake Revealed By  
A Chinese Legal Document (By Hungdah Chiu) 20 pp. \$ 2.00

**No. 3 — 1979 (24)**

The Dragon and the Eagle — A Study of U.S. - People's Republic  
of China Relations in Civil Air Transport (Jack C. Young) 65  
pp. \$ 3.00

**No. 4 — 1979 (25)**

Chinese Women Writers Today (Edited by Wai-lim Yip and William  
Tay) 108 pp. \$ 3.00

**No. 5 — 1979 (26)\***

Certain Legal Aspects of Recognizing the People's Republic of  
China (Hungdah Chiu) 49 pp. \$ 2.00

**No. 6 — 1979 (27)**

China's Nationalization of Foreign Firms: The Politics of Hostage  
Capitalism, 1949-1957 (Thomas N. Thompson) 80 pp. Index \$ 3.00

**No. 7 — 1979 (28)**

U.S. Status of Force Agreement with Asian Countries: Selected  
Studies (Charles Cochran and Hungdah Chiu) 130 pp. Index \$ 2.50

**No. 8 — 1979 (29)**

China's Foreign Aid in 1978 (John F. Cooper) 45 pp. \$ 2.00

\* Reprinted with revision (all other papers are original).

\*\* Translated from German with revision.

***Occasional Papers/Reprints Series  
in Contemporary Asian Studies***

***1980 Series***

**No. 1 — 1980 (30)**

The Chinese Connection and Normalization (Edited by Hungdah  
Chiu) about 200 pp. Index

\$ 5.00

**No. 2 — 1980 (31)**

The Conceptual Foundations of U.S. China Policy: A Critical  
Review (James C. Hsiung)

\$ 1.00

***Forthcoming***

**No. 3 — 1980 (32)**

A Comparative Study of Judicial Review Under Nationalist  
Chinese and American Constitutional Law (Jyh-pin Fa)  
about 150 pp. Index

\$ 3.50

\* Reprinted with revision (all other papers are original).

\*\* Translated from German with revision.



**ORDER FORM**

To Occasional Papers/Reprints Series in Contemporary Asian Studies, University of Maryland School of Law, 500 West Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201, U.S.A.

Check One:

Please Send:

<i>No.</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Copies</i>
------------	---------------	--------------	---------------

_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Please start my subscription of the OPRSCAS:  
Starting issue \_\_\_\_\_

Subscription price is U.S. \$10.00 for 8 issues (regardless of the price of individual issues in the U.S. and Canada and \$12.00 for overseas.)

My check of U.S. \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ copy(s) of invoice/receipt required. (Institution/library may request billing before making payment) (Make check payable to OPRSCAS)

Please send book to:  
Name/Corp./Library:  
Address: (Please include zip code)

_____
_____
_____

